

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

February 17, 2009

According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) 2007 Homeless Count, 73,000 homeless people live in Los Angeles County. On any given night, approximately 22,376 chronically homeless people look for shelter on our streets.

On November 20, 2007, the Board of Supervisors approved "Project 50" as a new effort to move 50 of the most vulnerable chronically homeless persons from the most concentrated area of homelessness in Los Angeles County (Skid Row) into permanent supportive housing, utilizing methodologies developed by Common Ground. Common Ground is a non-profit homeless services and housing agency based in New York City which has achieved tremendous success using its "Street to Home" model and "Vulnerability Index." The goal of Common Ground's Vulnerability Index is to identify those individuals who have been on the streets the longest, and to prioritize permanent supportive housing for 50 individuals based on the likelihood that those particular clients would otherwise die on the streets.

"Project 50" was approved as a two-year County demonstration program, and has achieved the unprecedented collaboration of 24 public and private entities including the Board of Supervisors, Sheriff, Mayor, the Veterans Administration Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, LAHSA, Los Angeles Police Department, several County

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Departments including the CEO, Departments of Health, Mental Health, Public Health, Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, Public Social Services, Probation; Housing Authority for the City of Los Angeles, Skid Row Housing Trust, Didi Hirsch, JWCH, Volunteers of America, Public Defender, Public Counsel, LA City Attorney, Courts, and Community Development Commission.

National studies have shown that the provision of supportive services linked to permanent housing for the vulnerable chronically homeless reduces the use of high-cost public services. Placement of chronically homeless people with severe mental illness or co-occurring substance abuse into permanent supportive housing is associated with reductions in hospitalizations, incarcerations, and subsequent use of shelters, emergency rooms, and psychiatric and detoxification programs.

On February 4, 2009, a Project 50 one year update meeting was convened and the following results were presented by Common Ground. Forty-nine people had been placed in housing as of November 30, 2008. (The 50th person was housed on February 3, 2009.) Of the 49 individuals, 43 remain housed. Four individuals became incarcerated and two people relinquished their apartments. Thirty-nine out of 43 tenants (91%) were diagnosed with a mental illness; 37 out of 39 individuals (95%) are receiving treatment; and 43 out of 49 people are currently receiving income benefits.

The pilot project has moved 50 vulnerable chronically homeless persons from the streets of Skid Row into permanent supportive housing; shattered myths about desires and capabilities of chronically homeless persons; demonstrated unprecedented collaboration across 24 public and private agencies; shown more money was spent on hospital and jail visits the year prior to housing than the net operating cost of Project 50; and identified more opportunities for cost shifting, such as from General Relief to SSI

and MediCal reimbursements. Furthermore, elements of Project 50 are already being utilized in Santa Monica, and plans are underway to replicate the program at four additional sites across LA County.

According to most benchmarks, the first year of Project 50 has been largely successful. The County along with municipal partners, stakeholders, and other public and private agencies are poised to take this pilot to a new level by expanding to serve 500 vulnerable chronically homeless persons.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and appropriate County Departments to assess the feasibility of expanding Project 50 to serve up to 500 vulnerable chronically homeless persons throughout Los Angeles County by the end of the next fiscal year ending on June 30, 2010; and
2. Direct the CEO to report back within four weeks, as a set item at the Board Meeting.